

COUNCIL ON HUMAN RELATIONS
LEVITTOWN, NEW JERSEY

ESTABLISHED MARCH 28, 1960

Ex officio (no vote)
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Advisors

Sidney W. Bookbinder, Township Solicitor
513 High Street, Burlington, N. J.
DU 6-2110
S. Marshall Roser, Jr., Township Police Chief
Municipal Building - Tr 7-3000

Consultants

Harold A. Lett
87 Spruce Street, Newark, N. J. - Bigelow
Theron A. Johnson 8-2163
127 Mosher Road, Delmar, N. Y. - Hemlock
9-4686

Suggestions For Local Leaders On Intergroup Education Work In Restricted Neighborhoods

1. Do Not Postpone Education and Leadership Work

Simply because a neighborhood is not faced with racial or other changes immediately is no reason to delay work to promote organization and understanding. The Commission on Human Relations has repeatedly found that no neighborhood is immune to population change. Our entire city and its suburbs are changing rapidly and neighborhood problems frequently arise overnight. Neighborhood leadership also has a responsibility to assist in solving problems that extend throughout the city. Local leaders need not wait for some crisis to arise on their doorstep before they begin working for understanding. Another reason for starting educational work prior to any tension or incidents is because educational work is slow and must have time to succeed.

2. Aim At The Leadership Level First

In order to prepare communities for racial change in housing or other changes the leaders of the community should be informed and organized first. Grass roots resistance to change may make work with the general population unprofitable in the beginning. Therefore, the most responsible and far sighted elements of the community must be acquainted with the facts and prospects first so that their influence can be enlisted in reaching the general population.

It is important that joint work to prepare communities for change be carried out under broadly representative auspices. An attempt should be made to include all important leaders in the community in the work of informing and guiding the public.

3. Housing Changes Should Be Related To Other Changes

Housing changes are only one part of the general changes in social life that are affecting our communities. It will probably be easier, for instance, for housing desegregation to take place in areas where some effort has been made toward desegregating employment, recreation, community activities and institutions. Particular attention should be given to promoting unsegregated patterns in those community activities and positions where non-whites or other minority persons will be respected and on an equal level or a higher social level than the general population. Doctors, clergymen and teachers all hold such positions. Minority persons in such positions in a community can help overcome stereotypes and suspicion.

4. Use The Resources Available To You

Films, displays, special speakers, discussion leaders, consultants and printed material are available from organizations that can be helpful to you.

(See "Your Home In A Changing City,") You do not have to tackle the problem of local public opinion single handedly or without appropriate tools. You can profit from an exchange of experience with groups that have worked on similar tasks in other areas.

5. Begin By Working On A Small Group Basis

It is much easier to deal with the issue of racial, religious or ethnic change in meetings if the group consists of no more than a dozen people. In a small group an informal and relaxed atmosphere can be maintained and everybody can have a chance to participate in the discussions and decisions. Less time is consumed on questions of meeting procedure. In small groups local leaders can be assured that they are working in controlled circumstances with people whom they can know personally.

A Leadership Program To Counter Housing Segregation

A leadership program aimed at informing the public in all-white residential areas about racial discrimination and segregation in the housing market should observe the following principles in operation:

1. Community leadership from organizations and institutions should be approached and trained before any work is begun with the general white residential public.
2. Sufficient moderate opinion should be represented in all discussions so that extreme points of view do not dominate meetings or presentations.
3. Program plans must be clear and specific and care should be taken to deal with rumors that would distort their true nature and purpose.

There are seven steps that should be part of a leadership program to work toward an open housing market in all-white areas:

1. Acknowledged church, civic and business leaders should be brought together to obtain a factual understanding of the problem of residential changes and housing patterns.
2. Local interest in organizations concerned with fair housing practices should be built up.
3. A publicity and information program conducted by local leadership should be put into effect for all local residents in order to get them thinking about housing changes and population shifts.
4. Local leaders must give visible examples of good interracial attitudes and associations in their own lives, particularly in their home neighborhoods.
5. The practices of local institutions and organizations must be planned so that the traditional isolation of racial groups will be modified and contacts between church congregations, athletic clubs and camping groups across racial lines can be fostered.
6. Local real estate, building and mortgage lending officials must be contacted and presented with proposals that will bring about to an end rigid housing segregation practices.
7. Local leaders and groups should look into the possibility of fair housing legislation to end housing discrimination. Legislation that expresses the conscience of the community should be studied and supported.

Here are some techniques for influencing your local situation:

1. Leadership Seminars - where selected leaders can come together to share knowledge and experience and plan to meet their community's needs or intergroup relations information.
2. Informal Luncheons or Gatherings - where positive local leaders can bring together selected business, civic and church leaders to develop understanding and plan local programs.
3. Information Programs - featuring speakers, debates, forums, panel presentations, etc. on topics of racial change and its effect on housing conditions.
4. Study Projects - in which residents and local leaders themselves catalog, map and assess local patterns of housing discrimination. Such projects can include surveys of local practices, attitudes and market conditions.
5. Films, Filmstrips and Displays - on housing and racial change can often be helpful at meetings, open house evenings and conventions.
6. Local Newspapers - if they are sympathetic or open to suggestions could run features, stories, editorials, etc. concerning unfair housing patterns.
7. Local Organizations or Institutions - may be willing to use programs about housing opportunities and restrictions. Groups that belong to national organizations could be persuaded to use the themes, program materials, etc. on human relations that are often prepared at the national level.
8. Adult Education in Local Schools - Can many times meet local needs by making courses available on race relations, community relations, etc.
9. A Community Relations Council - or a Human Relations Committee could be formed by local leaders from representatives of church and civic groups or within an organization. Such a council could provide a network for the continued training and influencing of neighborhood people.
10. Consultation - with persons in the intergroup relations field is important. It can help you avoid pitfalls and difficulties. Consulting with leaders from neighborhoods that have already worked with this problem of preparing for racial change can provide valuable tips and information. Leaders from stable areas already racially integrated can help you convince your neighbors that racial integration need not mean neighborhood decline in any sense.
11. Make use of good leaflets, pamphlets and articles on racial change. Items such as those contained in this kit help give facts that it would be inconvenient or difficult for you to give personally to local people.

Some Suggestions About Neighborhood Meetings

In Racially Changing Areas

What kind of a Meeting -

There are three kinds of meetings that have been held successfully to deal with problems in racially changing areas:

1. Block Meeting - which includes residents of a single block of a street. This type of meeting is usually small, very informal. Any block resident is eligible to participate. This meeting has the advantage of real grass roots contact and a very democratic basis. On the other hand, it may be hard to find leadership on a single block. If blocks federate, the resulting group may become top heavy with organization since every block in a neighborhood would be represented.
2. Neighborhood Leadership Meeting - includes the key persons, Opinion makers and most informed residents of an area. Very often this kind of meeting is called by some institution (church, synagogue, etc.) and representatives may be from other institutions. This group can bring strong, intelligent influence to bear on problems, but may not have adequate knowledge of the feelings and tendencies of the residents of particular blocks.
3. Simple Membership Meeting - includes anyone in the entire neighborhood who is committed personally to working on the changing neighborhood problem. Participation can be drawn from many areas of the neighborhood. These groups are usually most

efficient and are composed of reliable people. As disadvantages, these groups have to contend with the danger of becoming isolated elites or personalized cliques instead of networks for neighborhood education. Any of these meeting types or combinations of them may be used depending upon the needs of your area.

Certain other factors about such meetings should be stressed:

The meeting should be small (25 people top limit).

To discuss racial change, a question that is emotionally loaded for many people, in a large group is usually a mistake. The meeting should be called or chaired by someone from the area who is:

- known
 - respected
 - not unacceptable to residents because he is highly controversial.
- Although the meeting should be open to all residents, some care should be taken to insure that the clear majority of those attending are stable and reasonable people. Extremists should be in the minority.
- The meeting should be held on "neutral" ground, that is, a place that people will feel free to come to without feeling that they are under the auspices of any specific religious, political, ethnic etc. group.

- It is preferable to hold block meetings in a home. This is an informal atmosphere that sets a tone of neighborliness. Evening meetings are best, but shopping nights and those on which important or popular TV shows are scheduled should be avoided. The meeting time should be late enough so that parents can put children to bed before attending.
- The meeting should preferably be held shortly before the first Negro family moves in. People want to talk about this subject then.
- Be sure that the purpose of the meeting is clear. Take care to avoid any rumor or suggestion that the meeting is being held to keep non-whites out of the area. The meeting must be clearly designated as one at which the question of neighborhood change will be discussed.
- Be sure that leadership is firm enough to set an informal, friendly tone for the meeting. Opposing points of view should be freely accepted, but conflicts should not be violently expressed. The tone of controversy should not dominate. The tone of reasonable, practical discussion should.
- Set specific goals for the meeting. Responsibility should be fixed and some provision should be made for people to report back.

- Keep track of time. Having some coffee and tea on hand for the session adds a note of relaxation and friendliness.